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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

*Memorandum*



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 0600  
5 March 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Office of Current Intelligence  
5 March 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam as of 0600 EST

Communist Military Developments

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Communist Political Developments

4. The Soviet Government statement protesting the 2 March US air action against North Vietnam did not go beyond the standard Soviet indictment of US policy in the Indochina area. The statement recalled previous Soviet and DRV warnings and asserted that the "concentration of American armaments and armed forces in South Vietnam and on the approaches to the DRV" are a glaring violation of the Geneva Agreements.

5. The statement maintained that "if the makers of American policy in Vietnam think that they will frighten anyone by their bombings of DRV territory, they are deeply mistaken. Such hopes have no grounds whatsoever."

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6. The statement went a little further than previous Soviet warnings in repeatedly emphasizing the far-reaching consequences of US actions in Vietnam on Soviet-American relations. It declared that such actions "are incompatible with pronouncements about the desire to improve relations with the Soviet Union."

7. Yesterday's demonstration against the US Embassy developed into "the most aggressive and nastiest" in recent memory, according to Ambassador Kohler. It involved a mob of more than 3,000 persons, mostly Asians. US Embassy officials were informed by students that an incident was planned, but Soviet Foreign Ministry officials disclaimed any knowledge of the demonstrations.

8. Ambassador Kohler noted that protective measures were much more in evidence than during the 9 February attack and included some 300 Soviet militiamen on hand. The militia made a serious effort to hold back the majority of the crowd, but some 300 Soviet infantry troop reinforcements had to be called in to turn back the tide.

9. The Ambassador observed many individual battles between the demonstrators and the militia. At least ten militiamen were injured and many demonstrators were hauled off in Soviet paddy wagons. Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko promised compensation for the damage to the Embassy building and said that supplementary measures for its protection would be taken in the future.

10. Peiping's latest statement on US air attacks against North Vietnam is a defiant reiteration of positions already established by the Chinese Communists. The language is tough but the text contains no new threats of Chinese action.

11. The Chinese assert that increased air attacks against North Vietnam will never bring about a Communist surrender, but will be met by harder blows from the "people of South Vietnam" and result in eventual defeat for the US.

12. Hanoi is continuing to depict the 2 March air strike as a new step in US policy. A 4 March editorial in the party daily, for example, reiterated earlier Hanoi charges that a "continuous and

[redacted]

uninterrupted war" is planned against North Vietnam. The editorial also reasserted that this type of warfare is not only a direct challenge to the Vietnamese people, but to the entire socialist camp. Should the US persist in its attacks, the editorial declared, it will have to face the combined might of the socialist nations. This statement, and others in the editorial appeared designed to raise the spectre of an expanded conflict involving Moscow and Peiping.

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[redacted]

Political Activity in South Vietnam

14. A new spate of coup rumors in Saigon points up the divisions among South Vietnam's military leaders and the continued fragility of the political situation.

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15. Lending possible substance to the rumors, however, are reports of unusual deployments of security forces in Saigon involving one combat police battalion and three marine platoons

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[redacted] These could be precautionary moves in response to the rumors, but the deployments themselves have given rise to concern over a possible power move by Thi.

16. The present period appears to be one of maneuvering among individually ambitious generals and alliances among officers mutually suspicious of the religious and political orientations of one another. The major power struggle appears to be between older, established generals and the more radical "Young Turk" generals such as Thi.

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

17. The US Embassy in Saigon is unable to provide any background concerning a report filed by an NBC correspondent, sourced to a member of the South Vietnamese cabinet, that the Saigon government considers the war "useless" and favors negotiations to end it. The embassy notes that the report is contrary to the official position announced on 1 March by the Quat government.

Viet Cong Military Activity

18. Viet Cong activity continues to consist primarily of harassing fire against government troops, outposts, watchtowers, and hamlets, as well as various terrorist acts against the population. One US Army Special Forces soldier was killed and four other Americans wounded yesterday when the Viet Cong ambushed a patrol in the vicinity of Khan Duc village near the Laotian border about 50 miles southeast of Da Nang.

19. [redacted] continued deterioration of security in the northern districts of the central plateau province of Kontum. Route 14 north of the province capital, Kontum town, is under frequent harassment and there are unconfirmed reports of two or three new Viet Cong battalions in the area, possibly recently infiltrated. [redacted]

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20. Authorities in Kontum fear that the Communists are trying to isolate the northern districts from the province capital and may be planning to attack Kontum town itself within the next two months. Government forces have drafted contingency plans for a phased abandonment of various districts, finally including a complete withdrawal to coastal Binh Dinh Province, which is itself under serious Communist pressure.

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